

Newton Police Reform Task Force

Town Hall Meeting: Where do we want to go?

Tuesday, December 22nd

A recording of the meeting can be accessed by [clicking this link](#).

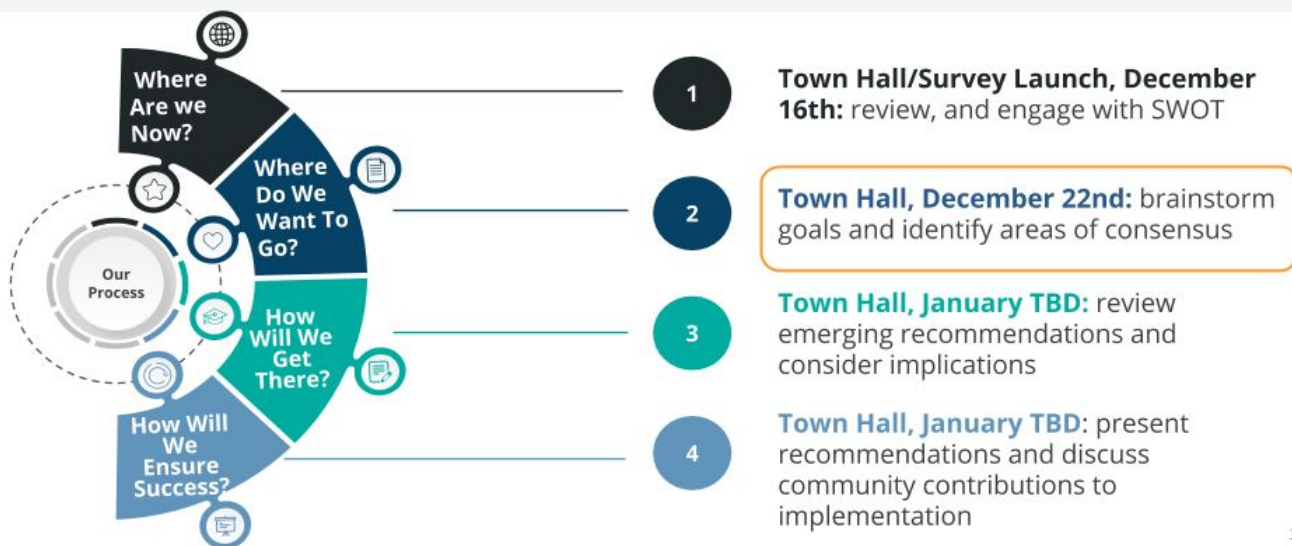
Introduction

The Newton Police Reform Task Force and the Strategy Matters consulting team met with members of the Newton community as part of an ongoing process to develop reform recommendations for the Newton Police Department. This document summarizes notes from the second in a series of public meetings coordinated by Strategy Matters. The goal of this meeting was to identify areas of consensus and explore areas of disagreement among participants regarding the future of public safety in Newton. The agenda was as follows:

- Opening
- Participant agreements
- Recap last week's meeting
- Summary: Reimagining Safety
- The Future NPD: Breakout Sessions by Topic
- Full group debrief
- Closing

Overview of Community Engagement Process

December 2020 - January 2021



Participant Agreements

The consulting team reviewed the following principles with meeting participants. These principles are intended to function as guidelines for participation and engagement in group discussion.

Participant Agreements

Good intentions do not assure positive impact.

Recognizing this, we need a way to take note of this in real time and to address it. To do this, we can use “ouch” and “oops,” - if someone experiences negative impact they need to say something (possibly ouch if that works), and then the person who, presumably unintentionally, caused the harm, needs to recognize the issue, and then together they can explore the issue or misunderstanding, and move to resolution.

Recognize and be aware of your power position

Each of us will be bringing various aspects of our identities into our meetings, whether it be the role you hold in the organization or a social identity such as your race or gender. These roles will bring various types of power (both formal and informal) to our contributions. Remember, you may inadvertently be exercising this power in meetings. For example, if a leader speaks first in a problem-solving session, it may suppress contributions from those who don't wish to seem like they disagree with the boss.

Please don't ask others to put their experience on a platter.

Seeking everyone's perspective is great, but asking them to speak from a specific part of their identity can be hurtful, and also may put the person in the uncomfortable role of trying to speak “for the _____ community.” Consequently, please refrain from asking for others' perspectives on the basis of your understanding of their racial/ethnic/gender identity or aspects of their lived experience.

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Participant Agreements

Approach discussions from a place of curiosity rather than assumption

Too often, we use a question to make a point or to show the deficiency we see in another person's point of view. It is far more generative to stay curious about views that you don't hold or understand, and ask your question/offer contributions from there. This enables others to offer their views in the fullest sense and enables each of us to set aside our own ideas long enough to truly hear them.

You won't be comfortable all the time, but we aim to protect your safety

Comfort is what you feel when none of your assumptions or beliefs are challenged. It's a good way to ensure that you miss opportunities for growth. So it's often good to not feel comfortable (even if it is mildly unpleasant). Safety is what you feel when you know that others respect you, care about your wellbeing, and demonstrate this by making space for you in the group. We don't ever want to create environments where people don't feel safe.

Please engage authentically and also with care and concern for others

We need you to be fully present and engaged, even when it is challenging to do so. This applies to both how you hear and how you speak. We ask that everyone “hang in” even when it is hard (when there is “radical candor”) and also to stay mindful of the need for respectful and caring dialogue even in hard conversations.

Step up vs. Step back

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Definitions of 'Racism'

In the experience of the consulting team, groups have trouble making headway, especially on difficult issues, if they do not have a shared understanding of central concepts and terms. The following were introduced as a means to ensuring that all participants were speaking the same "language."

Some Relevant Definitions

Racisms

- **Internalized:** When we believe we are less or more talented, beautiful, prone to criminal behavior, etc. because of our own race.
- **Interpersonal:** When we act on our own internalized racism, often through racial slurs or bigoted comments/behaviors.
- **Systemic:** When organizational policies and procedures have disproportionately negative effects on specific racial groups.
- **Structural:** When multiple institutions and decision makers collectively act or implement programs, policies, and procedures which result in disproportionately negative effects on specific racial groups.

Reimagining Safety

Members of the Police Reform Task Force worked with Dr. Ayesha McAdams-Mahmoud to support a community effort to reimagine safety for Newton residents. The consulting team and Task Force members thought that some of the results of this work would provide a good platform for further discussion with community members. The results of that work are summarized here:

Most Popular Principles of Safety	Most Popular Policy Ideas
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Mutual support and community-led rules ● Community Trust ● Unity & Inclusion ● Compassion & Empathy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Community responds to problems ● Emergency response teams for mental health ● Safekeepers and Healers, not police
Most Popular Principles of Accountability	Most Popular Policy Ideas
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Community rule-setting ● Dignity and redemption ● Trust and fairness ● Mutual support and restorative justice ● Community support 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Community should define rules ● Redemptive consequences ● Restorative justice circles ● Accountability instead of punishment
Most Popular Principles of Healing	Most Popular Policy Ideas
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Community acceptance & understanding ● Communication and deep listening ● Community accountability ● Community support for each other ● Forgiveness and compassion 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Community investment in healing ● Universal system of healing
Most Popular Principles of Transformation	Most Popular Policy Ideas
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Unity/ A sense of community ● Community-defined rules ● Communication and deep listening ● Embrace new beginnings 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Community establishes all rules ● Shared community resources

The Future of the Newton Police Department

After reviewing and discussing the introductory materials included above, meeting participants worked in small groups to address the topics described below.

1. **Overcoming systemic racism:** Where are the impacts of the history of racism in America on policing in Newton? What is the legacy and how are we experiencing it today? What changes are in order today to address these issues and historic injustices?
2. **Policing and community priorities:** what are the most pressing priorities for Newton communities? What role (if any) does policing play in meeting these priorities?
3. **Addressing public health concerns:** what is the role (if any) of police in responding to mental health and substance use disorders?
4. **Nuisance concerns:** what is the right role (if any) for police in addressing these issues (e.g. leaf blowers)? What changes would we like to see in the way NPD responds?
5. **School safety:** what is the role of police (if any) in schools? How might it change from the way police work in schools today?

Notes summarizing each discussion are included below.

<p>Overcoming systemic racism: Where are the impacts of the history of racism in America on policing in Newton? What is the legacy and how are we experiencing it today? What changes are in order today to address these issues and historic injustices?</p>	
<p>Potential Action Steps</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Consider ride alongs between elected leaders and police, as part of a 2 way conversation to not just understand what the police do, but also for police to understand the concerns leaders hear in the community ● We need a more diverse community in order to have a more diverse NPD, and that requires more affordable housing. ● We need to talk more about our history. ● Diversify our teaching staff - because our children need to see themselves reflected in our education system. We need diversity in all areas of our community. ● Newton uses maximum affordable housing set aside for people who already live here - that is a problem, preventing POC from moving here b/c the preference goes to the (predominantly white) who already do. Change this. ● We could do better on Fair Housing. We could do testing to ensure that we are getting bias out of the process wherever possible. ● Remove the resident preference in hiring for NPD. ● The Human Rights Commission seeking to pass protocols on how to address hate/bias incidents and crimes - across different levels of government.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Automated traffic enforcement: it is genuinely color blind. Requires state law change.
Attitudes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We have to talk more about our history, Newton NOT EXEMPT. From the perspective of police it (the racist history of our country as influential and formative in policing) can be hard to accept. It is particularly hard for people who pride themselves on being super liberal to acknowledge our own problems with racism/bias and systemic racism and its impacts. Let's acknowledge the anger that police may feel when they don't earn enough to live here - that's a fair response.
Context and History	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We have been seeing state-sponsored racism. Sanctioned violence against people of color. A historical moment that demands a different kind of action. We have to figure out what that action is. When violence against a certain race is state-sanctioned, it signals to the people that this is legitimate and normalizes it. Racism has been part of this country in every way - and it is integral and foundational to all we do. We have to wrestle with it, and it is so hard because it's baked in. We see the same thing in code enforcement, zoning, etc. We outlawed triple-deckers in response to specific groups and the powerful not wanting them living nearby. The history of policing is a troubling one, and it is connected to our current challenges. Some of our laws have grown up in direct response to racist attitudes about people and have been used to exert control over people through laws that were aimed at specific groups.
Questions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Is there an unspoken rule keeping Black people from living in Newton? Let's do more stuff together (police/community, across racial difference). What else can we do together? What can the police open up with residents, getting dialogue going?

<p>Policing and community priorities: what are the most pressing priorities for Newton communities? What role (if any) does policing play in meeting these priorities?</p>	
Priorities	<p>Foster Trust</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Help communities regardless of gender, race, ethnicity, to be confident that they are safe Community members need to be confident that they can call the police for help in a difficult situation <p>Effective Policing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> We need to make sure we all understand what we mean by "effective". Visible presence of police sometimes can affect positive changes (for example, slower

	<p>driving)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Police need to be equipped to deal with significant public safety threats (e.g., marathon bombing) • Effective police need to have modern/good tools <p>Welcoming and safe communities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Police are a reflection of society - there are many types of bias and discrimination - think more broadly than racism
<p>Police Role</p>	<p>Transparency</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure traffic safety by reporting data about crashes and other data so gov't can respond by lowering speed limits + other engineering solutions • Way to address when police are playing a harmful role (harming community members) • Communication - want them to earn trust by communicating back what actually happens after public incidents. • Police at community events - independent of incidents • Scoreboard metrics for police performance (focus on customer service) • Transparency - Policing can be dangerous, and we depend on them to do things that we cannot do. I would like to know more about the challenges they face • Training to differentiate likely threats from unlikely threats • Current purview of police includes monitoring of public safety issues like gas leaks <p>Community Relationships</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PARTNER with communities in identifying problems and developing solutions • More positive, proactive community involvement

<p>Addressing public health concerns: what is the role (if any) of police in responding to mental health and substance use disorders?</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consider pre-incident/pre police involvement. What are the structures/systems that we can imagine that can divert individuals? • Proactive mental health, substance use services - stopping the crisis before it happens. • Dispatch calls - how are calls routed? • Alternatives to 9-1-1 • What is the role of police in these interactions? • Currently, having a clinician co-respond is up to the discretion of the officers. • From a safety perspective, dual response is necessary for the safety of clinicians. • How can we improve interactions? • Training - what does that accomplish? Police have more tools in their tool belt to prepare for those interactions, less use of force, more positive interactions. • More proactive relationship-building between police and families and individuals with SUD, MH, ASD • MH and SA services need to be available 24 hours / day - this is why we are more reliant on police. • Uniforms may escalate situations. This is likely compounded by other identities (race, gender, 	

housing status, etc.)

- Not sure we will ever totally eliminate these interactions.
- Response needs that are adjacent to substance use and mental health
- Domestic violence calls
- School system

Nuisance concerns: what is the right role (if any) for police in addressing these issues (e.g. leaf blowers)?
 What changes would we like to see in the way NPD responds?

- Why are police addressing these concerns? Doesn't feel compatible - If police don't respond, who does?
- Idling issue: police went out with educational materials to have conversations with individuals, maybe it's not enforcement just education
- What are we prioritizing? These are issues of efficiency but are we prioritizing efficiency over residents feeling safe.
- Is there someone that could be policing that? It is a matter of public safety.
- Challenge: we don't always know what the situation is, caution against civilians doing traffic stops
- Traffic violations and stops, some of the most dangerous. would be dangerous for unarmed people to monitor
- Role of police with mask ordinance, education, walking around at playgrounds, giving information, providing what people need e.g helmets or masks
- In order to have more people that could monitor these ordinances, would cost more
- Police need to enforce ordinances or someone else needs to enforce them
- About decriminalizing and de-escalating the situations, don't want police to show up for situations that are not criminal, are there opportunities to not stop people and instead send tickets?
- Reimagining safety at schools-why do we need police officers to police other community members? Use the same concept-to send someone else that is trained and qualified
- Just mailing tickets-could be a missed opportunity to catch someone that might have done a wrong
- Managing these things causes police to be viewed negatively
- Right now there is a void, bunch of kids with no mask at park one person wanted to call cops, but not a need, what about more education and prevention? so police don't have to come
- Leaf blower complaints and snow shoveling, dog barking e.g. cities like boston have code enforcement officers who handle these types of issues
- Take money that is paid into police department to manage these things to pay others that could manage these types of situations
- Parking control officers good example of what could be done-little interaction
- Knowing individual cops is a good way to address relationships, but what about the structural issues? how does it help if there are no structural changes and members don't feel safe.
- Better policies and infrastructure needed- not to have situations but high costs (e.g fix the drop off issue)
- What about when people just don't listen when it is civilians enforcing the ordinances?
- Police would like to help, have a traffic bureau that focuses on school safety, can bring blue zone issue to the bureau

- Blue zone drop at schools with mix of walkers, bikers and drivers-police says should be managed by the schools but leaves big safety gap
- Opportunities for partnerships? e.g. schools and NPD, schools and BPW, to see why problems exist and come up with solutions
- Humanize interactions with police, be out there in the community
- You have to turn neighbors in, would be nice if the DPW drove around to find the problems

Other Nuisances

- Snow plows, city could plow own sidewalks
- Barking dog complaints, managed by animal control officer
- e.g. bear, animal control officer didn't have a tranquilizer had to call police who had to shoot the animal
- Trash complaints (putting it out day early and lots of trash), police had to go to neighbor and explain Situation of 105 owner of trash...shouldn't be role of police
- Mask enforcement
- Kids swimming at crystal lake

School safety: what is the role of police (if any) in schools? How might it change from the way police work in schools today?

- What does the research say re: proof of increased safety with an SRO?
- How do SRO's deal with a threat to a student's emotional safety?
- Issues with teachers: how do students go to SRO's to report problems with people who are already authority figures?
- restorative justice - why do we need police for that if the dean + admin are well-versed? Answer from NPD: consistency of practice, inside and outside of school
- the feeling of unease of needing to have SRO's in our schools - perhaps heightened for students of color. a feeling of not being safe. Why are they there?
- What kind of school experience are white students having with SRO's vs. students of color?
- What are we trying to accomplish by their presence and is this a naive solution to a complex problem?
- Deal with in school violence or threats of violence
- Sounds like social workers could be more beneficial than SRO's
- Police are another member of our team - there to help advocate for our kids, proactive.
- Whatever students say to SRO's is not in confidentiality - it can be used against them | SRO's do report back to the dep't, can become part of their record
- Important to have 1:1 relationships with students to build trust and build relationships. That's not foundational to the model being used now.